

**Meeting Date:** May 16, 2024

**Agenda Item No.:** 18

**Agenda Item:** Walleye biology and management

**Bureau Chief Approval:** LH

**Prepared by:** Andy Dux, Panhandle Regional Fisheries Manager

**Background:**

Walleye are native to the upper Midwest and Great Lakes states, as well as the southern Canadian Shield. In those areas, Walleye are prized by anglers as challenging quarry and fine table fare. As a result, Walleye have been introduced widely outside of their native range including to the Pacific Northwest and Idaho. Introductions have been the result of sanctioned efforts by state fish and wildlife agencies, from illegal introductions, or due to downstream or upstream migration from established populations. Where established, Walleye are often controversial, preferred by some anglers but capable of collapsing traditional fisheries or native fish communities.

Walleye were introduced in Idaho by the Department in the mid-1970s. These efforts were initiated by staff and approved by the IFG Commission. Additional guidance was provided to only stock Walleye only in closed systems where they have no chance of escaping to other waters. Currently Salmon Falls Creek, Oakley, and Oneida reservoirs are actively managed for walleye fisheries. Since the initial stocking, Walleye have been illegally released or migrated from existing populations resulting in a noted increase in range during the last several years. This presentation will provide a broad overview of Walleye biology, status in Idaho, and current management efforts, as well as discuss future challenges associated with maintaining traditional fisheries and conserving native species.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission administers state wildlife policy through supervision and management of the Department (Idaho Code 36-104).

**Public Involvement Process:**

This agenda item is for information only.

**Justification:**

This presentation is informational for the Commission. It is likely that the Commission will receive an increasing number of questions about Walleye and their management during the upcoming update to the statewide Fisheries Management Plan. In addition, changing angler demographics and environmental conditions, as well as the increasing range of Walleye are likely to lead to increased conflicts in future years.

**Staff Recommendation:**

This agenda item is for Commission information. No action is required.